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USDA Inside USDA Information

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INSIDE "INSIDE..."

A design manual...comments on periodicals...latest on metrics... science writing session next fall. These and other bits and pieces make up this issue.

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WORD FROM BOND

Word gets around. Al Bond, retired Wash. State editor, wrote that Ham Kenney, retiree from Canada, sent him a recent copy of "Inside..." Al wants on our list...says he likes "Inside's..." heads.

Those of you who remember Al might want to write him at 4104 21st Avenue, SE, Lacey, Washington 98503. Early in March, he attended the ACE regional meeting in Seattle, pipe and all.

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DESIGNED TO STANDARDS

Dave Sutton, GPA's design chief, recently distributed draft copies of the new departmental design manual to agency info. heads. After agency comments, he will develop the manual in final form.

The manual sets forth graphic standards for the Department's visual materials. When the standards are used consistently, they should help improve communication and reduce the cost of printed and other visual media.

That doesn't mean everything is going to look alike...only mandatory formats include certain in-house publications mostly, use of the Department's seal and name, and such things as stationery, newsletters, presentation material, and signs.

Periodicals are exempted from the standard formats. So are recruitment brochures and other special use materials.

Primary determination of which format to use is audience. The most restrictive format--or the format with the least number of options for cover style and page style--is the information category termed "administrative." That would be information designated for staff or close cooperators.

Greatest number of options come about when we want to reach an audience with whom we ordinarily have little contact and who receives competing material from other sources.

When the final manual is developed, "Inside..." will try to get copies to you in the states who might find it useful in

eserve

determining your own set of standards. We'll let you know when its ready.

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HERE'S HOW TO SPELL RELIEF

Shortly, GPA should have the report from the task force that's been studying USDA's periodicals. Mason Miller has been hospitalized and hasn't had a chance to finish the report. (No...he wasn't seriously ill...though Mase might not agree.)

Meanwhile, at a recent meeting of the local chapter of the National Association of Government Communicators, word was that the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has no policy to cut back on periodicals...will continue to review renewals one-by-one.

The word came from Harrison Wellford, exec. assoc. director for reorganization and management of the OMB. He has been involved with reorganization plans for the past 2 years. He also said there's no policy to cut back or downgrade information activities in the federal government...but information activities will be included as a part of overall reviews.

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ANOTHER MEETING

Among the many spring meetings scheduled is the 26th international technical communication conference, May 16-19, at Los Angeles. It's sponsored by the Society for Technical Communication.

We're intrigued by the title of the keynote address...to be given by Ray Bradbury, science fiction and television script writer. It's called "A few thoughts on the next billion years."

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SAVE OCTOBER

A few years back Experiment Station folks and USDA held a science communication seminar. Recent moves promise a similar one to be held next October at Ames, Iowa. More later....

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TO FAR AWAY PLACES

World travelers recently include Jim Webster, GPA, to China; Alice Skelsey, SEA, to Russia; and Don Looper, FAS, to Japan.

Jim sent back several tapes and a detailed letter about feature story possibilities. (By the way, shortly Russ Forte, GPA press division, will be sending copies of feature stories and Issue Briefing Papers to the central officers on "Inside's..." mailing list.)

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COME NOW, FELLERS!

Sam Rosen, Montana State Univ., called the other day to report that his legislature was considering a bill requiring all publications printed in the state to include cost and distribution information...on the front covers, no less. Included as publications are newsletters. Only legislative materials are exempt.

A few other states have similar requirements...generally with fewer details and less rigid placement instructions. Although

federal funds help finance state land-grant publications, we know of no way to avoid such a requirement if a state legislature passes such a law.

Sam asks that you write him if you've had experiences with such a requirement. He's willing to provide cost figures when asked but thinks the proposed approach is a bit much. "Inside..." agrees.

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SHOULD WE SAY...
METRICS INCHES ALONG?

Larry Marton, GPA, reports that after a year-long slowdown, metric conversion soon will get going again. USDA, which has metrication plans in place, pulled the plug last year because there was no uniform policy. Now the National Metric Board and the Interagency Committee on Metric Policy are prodding all departments to get moving as a team.

Chances are you'll see more material coming from USDA in centimeters, liters, kilograms and hectares before too long. FAS has already converted fully...ESCS has started publishing its foreign data in metrics and some of our general distribution publications are using the dual system--conventional units first with metric units in parentheses.

Even so, USDA will be careful about undertaking any conversions that will confuse the public significantly.

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FOOD FOR KIDS...

A new nutrition information campaign is underway...and you may have seen press releases about it.

This one is sponsored by the Food and Nutrition Service. Objective--using the best information and methods available--is to develop an effective campaign plan that will improve the way kids eat.

Just the contract winners themselves make the project a bit unique. They are the American Institutes for Research, a behavioral science group, and the advertising agency, Needham, Harper and Steers. (Let's call them AIR/NHS.)

...AN EXERCISE IN
COMM STRATEGY

In a "food for thought project" or progress report last week, contractors presented theme recommendations along with their rationale. The report was an interesting exercise in information strategy.

It was a rundown of the AIR/NHS orientation to priorities and objectives; papers prepared to serve as a basis for the research, materials development, and market test design; "expert opinion interviews" to get some initial advice concerning the overall campaign theme and design; a review of literature; results of six focus groups of elementary school kids and mothers with children of that age; and, finally, a plan for surveying consumer attitudes and practices relevant to the campaign theme.

Subject to some future noodling, the theme proposed is "thoughtful and informed choices in eating habits, with an emphasis on snacking."

The nutrition message(s) to be tested must be consistent with "good dietary advice"; self evident, important to the public and address a problem or problems with which the public is already concerned; target behavior changes that children can handle; and be broad enough to express importance of total diet while offering potential for focusing on more specific food consumption behaviors.

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N.C. CONVERTS RV

Visiting designer Al Brothers from N.C. State, here to help produce an exhibit for a government show on the Mall, told us the other day about N.C. plans to convert a recreational vehicle into a portable exhibit about Extension in his home state. Al figures the rig will travel around N.C. for several months...will contain visual messages of programs available to North Carolinians.

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LINE UP FOR ARIZONA

Univ. of Arizona is looking for a Coordinator of Communications. Individual hired will deal with all programs in resident instruction, research, and Extension...should be familiar with land-grant programs and objectives..preferably be a product of the land-grant system...be familiar with printed media, radio or TV, photography, editing...be responsible to the Dean of the College of Agriculture.

Application deadline is May 11. Essential requirements are Bachelor's and Master's degrees..at least one in communication with emphasis on ag comm...2 year's experience developing education programs...ability to create new programs.

For more information, write Dean Darrel Metcalfe at Tucson 85721 or call (602) 626-4171. To apply, contact Charles W. Martin, Head of Management Services, Coop. Ext. Service at Tucson, same zip. Martin's phone is (602) 626-1818.

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...OR ILLINOIS, BUT
HURRY

Thomas Knecht, head of publications at the Univ. of Illinois, sends another notice about an opening for a full-time editor on his staff. He has an April 6 deadline for applicants, but if you'll call Tom fast you can be considered.

Duties include editing publications from all areas of the College of Ag...rewriting...consulting with authors...fixing specs for type...determining format and layouts...handling proofs. An advanced degree is preferred.

If interested, send Tom your resume and...if you have them...three samples of work edited or written: 123 Mumford Hall, Urbana 61801...telephone (217) 333-2548.

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YES...NICE IS NICE

One of the slickest in-house newsletters we've seen comes from the Farm Credit Administration (FCA). Harold Street edits it.

Because FCA lends money, "Inside..." writers and editors look at the newsletter very carefully. We can't resist passing on a quote Harold claims came from Little Orphan Annie: "Whether you're rich or whether you're poor, it's nice to have money."